

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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R 260046Z AUG 78
FM USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3005
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN NEW YORK 03324

EXDIS

E.O.11652:GDS
TAGS: PBOR, MARR, MILL, LE
SUBJECT: URQUHART'S VIEWS ON LEBANON AND UNIFIL

1. UPON URQUHART'S RETURN TO NEW YORK, AMB LEONARD ASKED HIM ON AUGUST 24 FOR UPDATED ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION IN LEBANON AND A REPORT ON HIS EFFORTS TO AUGMENT THE UNIFIL PRESENCE IN THE BORDER ZONE. MOST OF URQUHART'S PRESENTATION COVERED THE SAME GROUND AS REPORTED FROM EMBASSIES BEIRUT AND TEL AVIV AND AMCONSUL JERUSALEM. WE WOULD PARTICULARLY NOTE THE FOLLOWING POINTS.

2. AS REGARDS PROSPECTS FOR MOVING A LEBANESE BATTALION SOUTH, URQUHART SAID GENERAL CUQ HAS BEEN CHARGED WITH WORKING OUT A SOUND MILITARY PLAN FOR THE TRANSFER BY HELICOPTER OF A LAF UNIT TO TIBNIN. ONCE THESE PLANS ARE DRAWN UP, THEY WILL BE PRESENTED TO THE GOL FOR THEIR REACTION. URQUHART EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE DOUBT THAT GOL WILL DO ANYTHING TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROPOSAL. HSI IMPRESSION IS THAT LEBANESE LEADERSHIP IS SO PREOCCUPIED WITH THE SITUATION IN BEIRUT THAT IT UNDERESTIMATES THE
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SIGNIFICANCE AND POTENTIAL BENEFIT OF A REAL EFFORT TO ESTABLISH ITS AUTHORITY IN THE SOUTH. IN GENERAL HE IS VERY DISCOURAGED BY THE LEBANESE ATTITUDE.

3. URQUHART ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT LAA UNIT AT NABATIYAH WHICH COULD REPRESENT COUNTER CHALLENGE TO GOL AUTHORITY, SOMEWHAT THE MIRROR IMAGE OF THAT POSED BY

HADDAD AND SHIDIAC. (HIS VIEWS ON THIS ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE OF SHATILA REPORTED IN BEIRUT 4967).

4. ON THE QUESTION OF UNIFIL'S ROLE IN THE ZONE NORTH OF THE ISRAELI-LEBANESE BORDER, URQUHART FEELS STRONGLY THAT THE KEY TO A MORE EFFECTIVE UNIFIL OPERATION IS FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT RATHER THAN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ADDITIONAL OPS. HE INDICATED THAT IN HIS DISCUSSION WITH THE ISRAELIS HE DID ALL THAT HE COULD TO ASSURE THEM THAT NEITHER UNIFIL NOR THE GOL WAS OUT TO CLOSE THE GOOD FENCE OR KILL HADDAD. HE RECALLED IN SOME DETAIL HOW HE TRANSMITTED WEIZMAN'S COMMENT REGARDING HADDAD TO BOUTROS AND THE LATTER'S REPLY.

5. ON THE ISRAELI ATTITUDE TOWARD UNIFIL, URQUHART SAID THAT HE HAD PUT IT TO THEM DIRECTLY AND IN STRONG TERMS THAT, WHILE THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE BORDER ZONE MAY SEEM GOOD TO THEM, IT DOES NOT REPRESENT FULFILLMENT OF THE UNIFIL MANDATE AND IT IS INHERENTLY UNSTABLE. HE SAID HE TOLD THE ISRAELIS THAT, WHILE THEY WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH PROTECTING THE CHRISTIANS, THEY HAD TO RECOGNIZE THAT THERE WERE TWO EMBATTLED MINORITIES IN THE AREA, NOT ONE. THE SHIA ALSO FEEL THEY NEED "A CHAMPION" AND ARAFAT IS WAITING IN THE WINGS. IF UNIFIL WITHDRAWS, THE ISRAELIS AGAIN WILL HAVE TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE PALESTINIANS.

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6. FINALLY, URQUHART SAID THAT HE FOUND THE ISRAELIS FIXATED ON THE SYRIANS AND CONVINCED THAT THEY ARE SEEKING TO DESTROY THE CHRISTIANS AND TAKE OVER LEBANON. ALL HIS EFFORTS TO ARGUE TO THE CONTRARY WERE OF NO AVAIL.

7. OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT URQUHART RETURNED FROM HIS TRIP UNCERTAIN AS TO WHAT THE LEBANESE AND ISRAELIS WILL DO NEXT, BUT SOMEWHAT UPBEAT ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR STRENGTHENING UNIFIL IN THE BORDER ZONE. IF THE PRESENT SITUATION ON THE GROUND REMAINS UNCHANGED, HIS DRAFT OF THE SYG'S REPORT TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL WILL BE CRITICAL OF THE ISRAELI AND THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA FOR BLOCKING EFFORTS TO FULFILL UNIFIL'S MANDATE. YOUNG

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